

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00347 01 OF 02 051321Z

43

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

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SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01 /139 W

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R 051029Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5951

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 COTONOU 0347

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, DM

SUBJ: ADMINISTRATIVE SHADE-UP FAVORS PROGRESSIVES

IN DAHOMEY

1. SUMMARY. PROGRESSIVE FACTION IN MRGD LED BY MIN INTERIOR AIKPE IMPROVED ITS POSITION SUBSTANTIALLY IN SEE-SAW STRUGGLE FOR PREDOMINANCE WITHIN MRGD WHICH HAS BEEN GOING ON BELOW SURFACE VIRTUALLY SINCE OCTOBER 1972 COUP D'ETAT (SEE COTONOU A-2 OF 1/4/73). IN SUDDEN MOVE, PRINCIPAL PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS WERE ALMOST ALL REPLACED WITH MAJORITY OF KEY POSITIONS GOING TO YOUNG MILITANTS CHOSEN BY AIKPE. IF PROGRESSIVES ARE ABLE CONSOLIDATE THIS POTENTIALLY POWERFUL APPARATUS BY OVERCOMING TRADITIONAL, CONSERVATIVE RESISTANCE, THEY WILL BE IN POSITION TO TAKE CONTROL OF COUNTRY AND FORCE PROGRAM OF RADICAL CHANGE. HOWEVER, MODERATE FORCES CANNOT YET BE COUNTED OUT. PRESIDENT KEREKOU SUCCEEDED IN REASSERTING HIMSELF AFTER MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDERED HIS EARLY DEMISE VIRTUALLY
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PAGE 02 COTONO 00347 01 OF 02 051321Z

CERTAIN (COTONOU 190. HIS POSITION NOW "ISOLATED" BUT STILL STRONG AS NORTHERNERS AND SOME PORTO-NOVIAN CONSERVATIVES RALLY

TO HIS SUPPORT. ULTIMATE OUTCOME OF STRUGGLE, WHICH HAS POLARIZED FORCES WITHIN MILITARY AND MRGD, REMAINS IN DOUBT. PROLONGED STAND-OFF APPEARS MOST LIKELY OUTCOME WITH PROGRESSIVES ATTEMPTING CONSOLIDATE GAINS AND FURTHER ISOLATE MODERATES. HOWEVER, NO ONE RULES OUT SUDDEN ERUPTION FROM EITHER IMPATIENT PROGRESSIVES OR CORNERED MODERATES. END SUMMARY.

2. VIRTUALLY COMPLETE CHANGE IN DAHOMEY'S PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL WAS ANNOUNCED IN FEBRUARY 12 "DAHO-EXPRESS." OF 45 PREFET AND SOUS-PREFET, ONLY SIX WILL BE RETAINED IN SIMILAR POSTS. REPLACEMENTS ARE, IN MAJORITY, DRAWN FROM RANKS OF YOUNG, WELL-EDUCATED MILITANTS. OF SIX NEW PREFETS, FOUR ARE WELL-KNOWN FOR THEIR PROGRESSIVE VIEWS INCLUDING TWO OF THREE DEMAGOGUES WHO INCITED COTONOU RIOTS OF FEBRUARY 28, 1973. COMPLETE LIST OF NEW APPOINTEES WILL BE FORWARDED TO DEPARTMENT BY POUCH.

3. THIS MASS SHAKE-UP IS VIEWED AS MAJOR VICTORY FOR AIKPE AND HIS PROGRESSIVE ALLIES. ITS POTENTIAL FOR BUILDING STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL POWER IS OBVIOUS. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH DAHO-EXPRESS, AIKPE STATED FIRST QUALIFICATION FOR NEW ADMINISTRATORS WAS BASED ON THEIR "POLITICAL CONVICTIONS." AS FURTHER INDICATION INTENDED ORIENTATION NEW PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATORS, AIKPE ASSERTED: "ADOPTION OF CAPITALIST OR BUREAUCRATIC MODEL WOULD END IN SUICIDE FOR OUR SOCIETY." ONE OF BASIC INTENTIONS OF CHANGE IS TO BREAK TRADITIONAL HIERARCHIC STRUCTURE AND MOBILIZE RURAL MASS. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS GOAL, AIKPE MAY APPLY SOME OF METHODS HE IS SAID TO HAVE OBSERVED AND ADMIRERD IN GUINEA. THIS WOULD PROBABLY INCLUDE COMBINATION OF "PROGRESSIVE" SOCIO-ECONOMIC MEASURES WITH FIRM AUTHORITARIANISM.

4. MOST APPOINTEES ARE NOT BEING SENT TO HOME REGIONS. THE TWO INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED IN THE FEBRUARY 28 RIOTS WILL BE IN THE NORTH WHERE THEIR ABILITY TO IMPOSE RAPID RADICALIZATION IS LIKELY TO BE LIMITED BY LOCAL PRIDE, CONSERVATISM AND TRIBAL EXCLUSIVITY. FURTHERMORE, MANY YOUNG THEORETICIANS, WHEN FACED WITH THE INTRACTABLE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF CHANGING A TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE, MAY FIND RADICAL THEORY LESS APPLICABLE IN PRACTICE THAN IT SEEMED IN ACADEMIC DISCUSSION.
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PAGE 03 COTONO 00347 01 OF 02 051321Z

5. THE DECLARED NEW "REVOLUTIONARY" SYSTEM WILL BE BASED ON GIVING POLITICAL POWER AT THE LOCAL LEVEL TO YOUTH, WOMEN AND WORKERS. THESE ARE ELEMENTS IN AFRICAN SOCIETY VIRTUALLY EXCLUDED FROM THE TRADITIONAL HIERARCHICAL POWER STRUCTURE WHICH IS USUALLY BASED ON AGE, BIRT
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PAGE 01 COTONO 00347 02 OF 02 051853Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 COTONOU 0347

7. FOR THE FUTURE, DEGREE OF INTERNAL RADICALIZATION IS NOW
LIKELY TO INCREASE. ITS GROWTH WILL DEPEND ON HOW EFFECTIVELY
THE NEW ADMINISTRATORS CAN AND WILL PRESS FOR CHANGE. PRO-
GRESSIVE SOUTHERN ELEMENTS ARE NOW ON THE ASCENDENCY. HOWEVER,
KEREKOU STILL RETAINS SOME TRUMPS. HE HAS REPORTEDLY RALLIED
NORTHERN SUPPORT BY HIS SERIES OF DEFIANT SPEECHES IN WHICH HE
WARNED OPPONENTS THEY FACE A SHOOT-OUT IF THEY WISH TRY REMOVE
HIM FROM OFFICE. THIS MAY BE ENOUGH KEEP HIM AND SOME OF HIS
CONSERVATIVE COLLEAGUES DN OFFICE FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE.
HOWEVER, IN TERMS REAL POWER, THE INSTALLATION OF THE NEW
ADMINISTRATIVE APPARATUS WILL STRENGTHEN PROGRESSIVES IN WHAT
CONTINUES TO BE A SEE-SAW STRUGGLE FOR PREDOMINANCE WITHIN THE
MRGD. A POLARIZATION HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER PAST FEW MONTHS.
NORTHERNERS IN THE MILITARY, WITH SOME CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS
FROM PORTO-NOVO, HAVE RALLIED BEHIND KEREKOU. THE FORMER ARE
STILL INCENSED AT THE FACT THAT COL. ALLEY REMAINS IN PRISON
AND COL. KOUANDETE HAS BEEN INVOLUNTARILY RETIRED. SOUTHERN
PROGRESSIVES, BOTH MILITARY AND CIVILIAN, HAVE TAKEN OPPOSITE
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PAGE 02 COTONO 00347 02 OF 02 051853Z

SIDE. PRESENT STAND-OFF COULD CONTINUE FOR MONTHS OR ERUPT AT
ANY TIME. NEITHER SIDE IS NOW STRONG ENOUGH TO ELIMINATE THE
OTHER DESPITE THE FROWTH OF PROGRESSIVE STRENGTH. MOST SOPHIS-
TICATED, KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS, INCLUDING A WELL-CONNECTED
FORMER MINISTER, BELIEVE THE PRESENT STAND-OFF COULD GO ON FOR

SOME MONTHS WITH PROGRESSIVES CONTINUING TO HACK AWAY AT KEREKOU'S POSITION. HOWEVER, NO ONE EXCLUDES POSSIBILITY OF SUDDEN MOVE BY EITHER SIDE TO ATTEMPT ELIMINATE THE OTHER. GREATEST DANGER FOR COUNTRY IS THIS CONTINUED STALEMATE IN WHICH GOVERNMENT MACHINERY IS HAMSTRUNG BY PREOCCUPATION OF PRINCIPAL DECISION-MAKERS WITH POLITICAL MANEUVERING.
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